

2011-2012 Weekly Field Reports

Copacabana, King George Island

Volume 8
December 5, 2011

Science Report:

1. **Penguins:** 74% of the Adélie penguin nests in our study sites have hatched chicks and 14% have failed. 79% of the gentoo penguin nests in our study sites have chicks, and only 3% have failed. Normally, Adélie penguin chicks hatch ~32 days after the second egg is laid; however, due to early snowstorms and cold temperatures in October this year, most likely delaying development in those eggs not initially incubated well, some of our Adélie penguins have hatched eggs as late as 43 days after the second egg was laid!

2. **Skuas:** We again visited all 159 of our skua territories this week and found many new nests. Currently 43% of the territories have active nests.

On Monday (12/5) five more geolocator (GLS) tags were attached to breeding Copa brown skuas.

3. **Giant Petrels:** On Saturday (12/10), we began the giant petrel nest census, starting at Point Thomas. The complete census of all colonies will be included in next week's Sit Rep. A chick census will also be done later in the season, to get an estimate of this year's breeding success.

4. **Seals & Whales:** We conducted two seal censuses this week, covering the beaches along the entire western shore of Admiralty Bay. On Friday (12/9), the census from Copa to Patelnia resulted in 488 elephant seals (84 weaners, 398 juvenile/unknowns, 6 males) and 1 Weddell seal. The elephant seal numbers are not surprising, since there is a large breeding area near Patelnia (although the breeding season is over), and this is the time of year when many start to come ashore to molt (both breeders & non-breeders alike). Our Copa to Pt. Thomas census found 15 elephant seals (12 juveniles and 3 males), 2 crabeater seals, and 1 Weddell seal.

On Saturday (12/10) we observed our first leopard seal attack of the season at Point Thomas; the prey species was an Adélie penguin. On that same day, another leopard seal was observed on a beached ice flow in Ezcurra inlet.

Twice this week, once on Monday (12/5) and once on Saturday (12/10), we observed two humpback whales diving and feeding at the head of Admiralty Bay.



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Weekly Weather:

This week the wind blew a nearly constant ~20 mph, with gusts up to 30 mph from the west. Temperatures remained fairly mild, hovering at ~34° F. On Wednesday (12/7) we received rain turning to snow for part of the day. Winds finally subsided on Saturday (12/10) and remained calm until mid-afternoon on Sunday (12/11), when they increased to ~30 mph from the west.

The 2011-12 Copa Field Team
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